

NT 3XE3/5XE5/6XE6
New Testament Eschatology:
Living in the End Times



McMaster Divinity College
Jan 10–April 8
Wednesday 4:00pm–5:50pm
Winter 2022

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Office Hours: By Appointment
Room 243

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is primarily an exegetical study of the main eschatological passages in the New Testament (NT). Following a two-step hermeneutical approach, we will look at: (1) what these passages meant in their original context and (2) what they mean to us in our contemporary setting. The course consists of three learning components. First, we will examine various prophetic and apocalyptic thoughts before the times of Jesus and look at how various NT eschatological traditions were developed from these ideas. Second, we will read through the major eschatological passages in the NT and discover unifying themes of NT eschatology through carefully read through the text in the original context. And finally, we will look at the contemporary significance of the selected NT texts and discuss how they help shape an eschatological lifestyle, i.e. a Christian way of life that does not lose sight of the second coming of Christ.

MODE OF DELIVERY

This course will be delivered in the **Modified Hybrid** method. A **Modified Hybrid Course** meet in person and online in an alternating sequence. One week the course meets in person, on campus; the following week the course meets online. This pattern allows for some on-campus community time for each course but also maximizes the benefits of hybrid with reduced trips to campus and the use of online learning strategies. The alternate online weeks will include a blend of both asynchronous and synchronous learning. **Synchronous** learning is online or distance education that happens in real time, whereas **asynchronous** learning occurs through online channels without real-time interaction. The online weeks will be structured around online instructions and discussions in both synchronous (face-to-face and live-streaming lectures, video chat, etc.) and asynchronous (pre-recorded lectures, threaded discussion etc.) methods. Program students at a distance (more than 100 km) or anyone who is feeling unwell/unsafe (with permission from Registrar's office) can join the in-person sessions through live-streaming.

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor (by appointment through WebEx/Zoom) to discuss any questions raised in the forum and/or the assignments. Professional degree students should expect to commit 4-5 hours/week on the course and Advanced Degree students (MA, DPT, PhD) should expect to commit 10-12 hours/week on the course.

SPECIALIZATIONS

Biblical Studies (BS)

Students taking this as a Biblical Studies course will be encouraged to explore the historical, cultural setting and theological emphasis of various eschatological texts in the Bible, as well as scholarly debates concerning the interpretation of the contents.

Pastoral Studies (PS)

Students taking this as a Pastoral Studies course will be encouraged to explore how the various themes of biblical eschatology are relevant for Christian faith and practice in the contemporary world.

Church & Culture (CC)

Students taking this as a Church and Culture course will be encouraged to explore the eschatological messages within its historical and culture setting and compare it to the many interpretations in the contemporary cultural landscape.

Advance Degree Students (MA, DPT, PhD)

Advance degree students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with their primary supervisor and the course instructor to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the program.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The following goals are set for the student:

Knowing:

- To become familiar with the main eschatological passages in the NT for use in teaching and preaching ministry
- To gain an understanding of problems and issues in the controversial areas of Christian eschatology and to be able to identify the text(s) that illuminate the options

Being:

- To become competent interpreters of the text
- To gain a positive appreciation of theological unity and diversity in the NT
- To allow the eschatological passages to motivate, form and transform our faith, worship and Christian way of life

Doing:

- To develop skills in interpreting the eschatological passages in the NT in terms of their theological, historical and social context
- To explain key topics and terms related to NT eschatology
- To be able to evaluate apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic artwork in various media (music, films, literature, TV shows, etc.) from a biblical perspective

TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS

1. Students are required to possess the following:
 - The English Bible (modern version such as NASB, NRSV or NIV)
 - The Greek New Testament (for those with Greek competence). Students with facility in Greek are encouraged to use their Greek Bible
 - Additional reading materials will be distributed on Avenue to Learn (A2L) prior to the first day of class
2. Students are recommended to have access to the following:

The Apocrypha (Deuterocanonical books) and the Pseudepigrapha

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact:

READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3;

Phone: 416.620.2934; fax: 416.622.2308; email: books@readon.ca.

Other book services may also carry the texts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to complete all of the following assignments. All assignments should be uploaded in PDF format to the designated Avenue to Learn (A2L) course folder. No unfinished assignments are permitted. See below for late submission policy.

1. Reading and Class Participation (15%)

Students are expected to read the assigned readings (uploaded to A2L), attend class and participate in class and online discussions. Students are also required to read through the text, a selected commentary on the passages covered in class. A reading log along with their final paper, indicating that they have completed (or the percentage of) the reading assignment must be handed in with the exegetical sermon.

Reading Log Due Date: **April 6 at 11:59pm**

2. Cultural Artefacts: Contemporary Significance (25%)

Students are to choose a contemporary cultural artefact that provides insight into how eschatology is portrayed and understood in society. These artefacts should be posted to a class A2L **one week** before the scheduled presentation. Students can choose from any type of media (news, music, arts, literature/poetry, film/TV series, comics, blog/vlog, etc.) of any period. Examples of a cultural artefact could be a current news story, an article, a blog/vlog post, a scene from a movie/TV show, the songs of an artist/group (secular or worship), or a short story (fictional or real). The following is a list of sample topics:

- The portrayal of chaos and hope in society in post-apocalyptic film(s)
- The use of kingdom language in the songs of the Hillsong Worship ministry
- The last judgment scenes in contemporary and classical paintings
- The use of kingdom language in Christian and/or non-Christian music
- The caricature of the Rapture in films
- End time prophecies and teachings of a particular tele-evangelist/blogger
- Apocalypticism in popular music

The initial post should include a brief description of the artefact to provide context. Students are expected to give a short presentation (10-15 mins) and lead a short discussion time (10-15 mins) during class (schedule will be determined in the first couple weeks of class) to talk about the portrayal of eschatology in the artefact and how it reflects an ideology and/or shared cultural values in modern society. Students should also compare the modern cultural assumptions with ancient (biblical) perspectives on various eschatological elements. The presentation should raise at least two questions for class discussion.

Students are expected to go through the weekly presentation materials *before* coming to class so that the presentation will not simply be a summary of the topic (e.g. give the entire plot of a TV show) but a meaningful discussion of the contemporary significance and relevance of biblical eschatology.

3. A Pastoral Letter/Response (20%)

Write a short pastoral letter (1000-1500 words) assuming the following scenario: You learned that an old friend of yours was once a follower of Harold Camping (or some other well-known end-time prediction group).¹ After Camping's latest failed prediction for the second coming of Christ, he/she lost faith not only in the leader of the group, but the Christian eschatology in general. Your friend started to question whether it makes sense to believe in the second coming of Christ and whether eschatology has any bearings in our day-to-day life. In other words, the relevance and value of eschatology in Christian theology and Christian living has been called into question.

The objective of this letter is to try to explain to him/her, in a pastoral manner, the relevance of the Parousia to a modern-day Christian and the function of apocalypticism in the biblical text. Take note that the goal of the letter is to persuade, not to confront. There is thus no need to attack the character of the cult leader. The key is to demonstrate the kind of eschatology that is formed by responsible exegesis of the biblical text is still relevant for contemporary churches.

Due Date: **Feb 27 at 11:59pm**

4. Final Written Assignment (40%)

¹ See for example: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_predicted_for_apocalyptic_events

Students will prepare a research paper (not more than 4000 words). At least 10 academic secondary sources are required for these papers, and all must be used and cited in the paper. Sources may include monographs, commentaries, and articles from journals and books. Sources must NOT include web sites (e.g. blog posts), one volume Bible dictionaries, study Bible, Bible translations, and dated devotional commentaries. Note, however, that students taking this course for Church and Culture specialization may wish to use relevant websites as additional resources that illustrate contemporary worldviews or application issues.

Biblical Studies Specialization: Exegetical Paper

Student will select one self-contained passage and complete an exegetical analysis. The passage must be directly related to NT eschatology, either those passages covered in class or approved by the professor. This paper must follow the *MDC Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses*. The paper should include:

- i. A clear statement of the thesis in the introduction
- ii. The historical and cultural context (*Sitz im Leben*) of the passage
- iii. A detailed exegesis of the entire passage
- iv. Justification of text boundaries and explanation of how this passage fits within the overall argument of the text
- v. Theological reflections on the passage (either integrate with your exegesis or at the end of your paper)
- vi. Connections to the rest of the NT eschatology
- vii. A clear conclusion

Pastoral Studies Specialization: Exegetical Sermon/Teaching Module

Students are asked to write an exegetical sermon (not more than 4000 words) based on an eschatological passage. Paper Break Down: (1000–1500 words exegetical comment; 2000–2500 words sermon).

- i. The assignment is consisted of two parts. The first part is a 1000-1500 exegetical comment on the selected passage. Students are expected to be able to engage in exegetical analysis. Succinct comment should be made on particular exegetical issues and hermeneutical decisions regarding the selected passage. *This part of the assignment has to follow the MDC style guide.*
- ii. The second part of the assignment is the teaching/preaching component. It should be equivalent to a 20-30 minute presentation. It could be written in a spoken style, intended to be deliver on the pulpit or in a classroom setting. This part does not have to follow the style guide, but reference to illustrations should be included.
- iii. The teaching project may include a teaching session for a Bible/small group study, a Sunday School course. Note that a teaching project also needs to have an application section. A short summary of the real/imagined target audience (demographic background and settings) as well as a brief description of your homiletic decision are needed.
- iv. Since this course is not a homiletics course, the main purpose of this assignment is not to access each student's ability to write a good sermon. However, students are expected to be able to work under sound homiletic and teaching principles.
- v. The purpose of this assignment is to assess the student's ability to (1) interpret the text of the NT with a theologically and biblically sound hermeneutical method and, (2)

apply the message to discipleship, community and ministry formation and presenting it in the contemporary contexts.

Church and Culture Specialization: Thematic Paper

Each Student will select a theme/concept or a particular word/word-group that is prominent in the eschatological passages and write a paper (not more than 4000 words). The paper must be grounded in biblical passages, and it must incorporate the following elements: (1) a discussion of the meaning and significance of the theme/word in the historical context; (2) a discussion of how the message engaged with his (first-century) readers and how this engagement can provide insights for contemporary engagement with modern cultural contexts; and (3) a discussion of the practical applicability of the theme to a specific modern context. This paper must follow the *MDC Style Guidelines*. The paper should include:

- i. A clear statement of thesis in the introduction
- ii. A clear explication of the theme and its importance
- iii. Analysis of relevant passages that relate to the theme
- iv. Exegesis of any significant or controversial verses
- v. Theological reflections on the theme
- vi. Implications of the theme for a contemporary Christian worldview
- vii. Possible themes: Parousia; Kingdom of God; watchfulness; the Son of Man; the unknown timing; resurrection; hope; final judgment; the millennium; heaven and hell; student's choice (must be approved in advance by the professor).

Student Presentations (for ALL specializations): Students will give a short presentation of their preliminary ideas for the written assignment during the second last class (March 30). The presentation should summarize the major exegetical issues of the passage(s) and their intended main application/implication(s) of the paper. Each presentation is followed by a short discussion, which allow students to gain **constructive** criticism in order to improve their work. The goal of this presentation is to facilitates a collaborative learning environment in which instructor and students are engaged in active learning together.

Paper Due Date: **April 6 at 11:59pm** (Late paper will not be accepted after April 10)

Grading Summary and Due Date:		
Reading and Participation	15%	April 6, 2022
Presentation and Discussion	25%	TBD
Pastoral Letter	20%	Feb 27, 2022
<u>Final Written Assignment</u>	<u>40%</u>	<u>April 6, 2022</u>
Total	100%	

SCHEDULE

Dates	Class Topics
Jan 12	Course Introduction: Controversial Areas of Biblical Eschatology History and Trends in the Study of NT Eschatology Contemporary Significance
Jan 19	The Origins of NT Eschatological Hope: Jewish Prophetic Traditions Text: Jewish Prophetic Writings (OT)
Jan 26	The Origins of NT Eschatological Hope: Jewish Apocalyptic Traditions Text: Jewish Apocalyptic Writings (OT and Second Temple Literature)
Feb 2	The Eschatology of the Early Church: A Chronology Pauline Eschatology I: The Parousia Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13—5:10 and 2 Thessalonians 2
Feb 9	Pauline Eschatology II: Resurrection and the Intermediate Stage Text: 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 4:7–18; 5:1–10 Presentation: _____
Feb 16	Pauline Eschatology III: A Unifying Pauline Eschatology? Text: Pastoral and Prison Epistles Presentation: _____
Feb 23	Mid Term Break
Mar 2	Synoptic Gospel I: The Signs Text: Mark 13:1–37 Presentation: _____
Mar 9	Synoptic Gospel II: The Fulfillment Text: Matthew 24–25 Presentation: _____
Mar 16	Synoptic Gospel & Selected General Epistles: The Delay of Parousia Text: Luke 17:22–37; 21:5–36; 2 Pet 3:4–13; Heb. 11:8–19 Presentation: _____
Mar 23	Johannine Eschatology I: Inaugurated Eschatology Text: The Gospel and Epistles of John Presentation: _____
Mar 30	Johannine Eschatology II: Selected Topics in Revelation Text: Revelation 20:1–22:5 Presentation: _____
April 6	Conclusion: Major Themes in New Testament Eschatology Towards an Eschatological Lifestyle

REFERENCES

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- Schmidt, Thomas E. and Moisés Silva. (eds.) *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.
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———. *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology*. London: SPCK, 2019.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR

The following guidelines are presented to encourage all students to participate together in this course, and should be kept in mind at all times.

1. Please respect the opinions of others, even if you do not agree with them. Extend courtesy by not ridiculing others' ideas, but feel free to respond to them logically and critically and in an orderly manner.
2. Students should be on time to class, or be prepared to offer an explanation after class to the professor.
3. Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.
4. Students may eat and drink in class so long as they do not distract others or leave a mess behind.
5. Students should not engage in anything during class time that prevents them from focusing and participating in class discussions.
6. Students are not to carry on private conversations in class. If something is unclear, the whole class will benefit by a question being asked out loud.
7. Cell phones and related devices are to be silenced during class. If a student must for some reason accept a phone call, he or she ought to discretely leave the class in order to do so.

Students who fail to respect these guidelines will be dismissed from the class, with all of the consequences implied.

LATE SUBMISSION POLICY

All assignments must be submitted on or before the date due, unless other arrangements are made in advance. A late penalty of 2% per day will be applied to all assignments submitted after the deadline, unless an extension has been obtained from the instructor prior to the deadline. Assignments cannot be submitted after **April 10, 2022** without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (strickpd@mcmaster.ca).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity

College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

In this course we will be using a web-based service ([turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com)) for plagiarism detection. Students who do not wish to submit their work to [turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) can submit an electronic copy of their work via email in PDF format and no penalty will be assigned, but all submitted work is subject to normal verification standards in order to ensure that academic integrity has been upheld (e.g. online search).

GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

STYLE

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

DISCLAIMER

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.